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Arthur Whiting

Pianoforte Pedal Studies

PART I

Elementary Use of the Damper Pedal

(REVISED EDITION)

PART II

Use of the Damper Pedal in Phrasing and Tone-Color

Each, $1.50

New York : G. Schirmer
BOSTON : THE BOSTON MUSIC COMPANY

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ARTHUR WHITING

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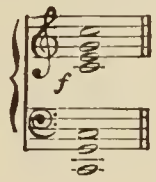
INTRODUCTION

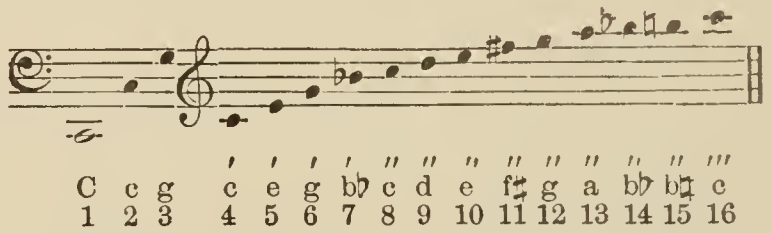
The pedal is the soul of the pianoforte

—Anton Rubinstein

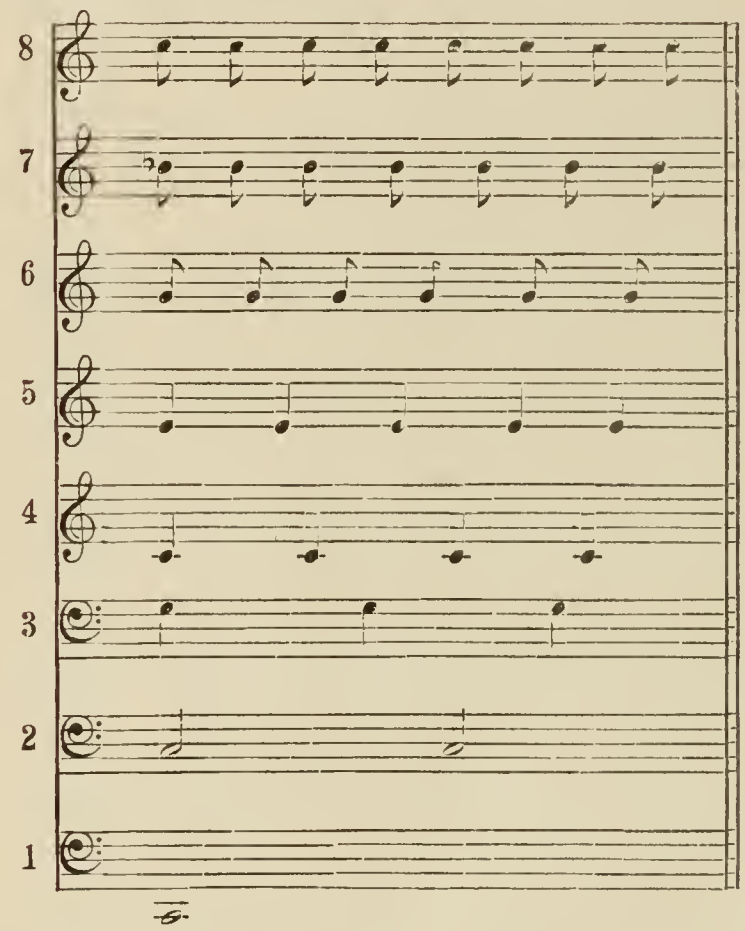
The Damper Pedal Intelligent listeners will agree that the pianoforte is as truly alive with the pedal, as it is dead without it; and those who are wont to speak of the "loud" pedal would describe it more accurately by calling it the "live" pedal. Conservatives of the last century evidently looked on the damper pedal as a luxury to be used for special effects. Many conscientious teachers of the present day accept it as a mixed blessing; while others hope that their pupils, divinely aided, may display what they regard as the mysterious and indescribable talent for using the pedal; relieving themselves from responsibility by the thought that the faculty is born, not made.

Systematic Training The author hopes to show in this series of studies that an elementary pedal technic can be taught; and that later, with this technic, the student will be prepared to undertake intelligently the less teachable problems of tone-color and artistic phrasing. Rudiments of the art should be learned with the general rudiments of pianoforte playing, in order that the young pianist, guided by systematic knowledge, may early form good habits.

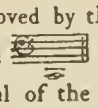
Sympathetic Overtones This chord  with pedal, glows; whereas the same chord, without pedal, is dull and almost colorless. The reason for this, a scientific one, is explained exhaustively in Helmholtz's "Treatise on the Sensations of Tone." The principle involved is that of Sympathetic Vibration. Every tone has its overtones (harmonics or partial tones). A pianoforte string, at the impact of the hammer, vibrates not only as a whole but also in segments, producing with the fundamental tone its octave, twelfth, fifteenth, etc.; for instance, C produces overtones in this order:



If these overtones up to c″ are written in score, showing the relative number of vibrations to one vibration of the fundamental tone, they will appear thus:



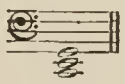
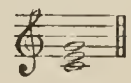
The overtones, except from the longest strings, are too weak to be distinctly heard; but, when the dampers are raised by the pedal, the wires corresponding to the overtones throughout the instrument are brought into sympathetic vibration;* thus a note struck

*The existence of these overtones is proved by the following test:—silently press down the key of a low note, as  and, without pedal, strike a short, strong blow on any or several of the notes corresponding to its first eight overtones; whereupon the same sound will be heard vibrating in the wire of the key held down. Other interesting experiments are described by Helmholtz.

gives forth its fundamental tone and overtones amplified by this vibration; a multitude of sound rays, making a rich, lustrous color.

REGISTERS

The student should early make a study of the different registers of the pianoforte and the characteristics of each. He will find the vibrations in the lower part so strong that an interval less than a fifth is unbearable, while the more moderate strength of the middle register allows all intervals to be used effectively. The vibrations of the upper part are so short-lived and weak that no dampers are provided for them.

This triad  is muddy, because the strong overtones, being crowded, beat against and contradict each other. The same chord in this register  is harmonious, and the highest notes in the instrument have so little character that any three may sound at the same time without disagreeable effect. Use of the pedal appropriate to these different conditions comes from experience and thought.

AN HYPOTHESIS

It is tempting to imagine what the evolution of the art might have been if the pianoforte, from the beginning, had been made with the dampers up when at rest, instead of touching the wires, as is now the normal state. In that case the strings would vibrate, after being struck, until silenced by the player, who, by pressing with the foot, would force the dampers upon the wires, as the hand on the harp strings arrests their vibration. The possibilities of the beloved instrument in the hands of a novice under these conditions would be less terrible than might be supposed, for a child, is his first lesson, would be taught to damp the sound by moving the foot, being warned by his own ears against neglect of this important rule. Even the lawless household strummer would be compelled, in self-defence, to wipe out some of his worst effects.

The coördination of the hands and foot would, of necessity, be much finer than at present; for all students would be guided by their hearing.

Their cultivated ears, trained to delicate feeling for consonance and dissonance, and accustomed to a liquid, iridescent tone, would lead them to beautiful effects, of which we to-day have but faint glimpses and suggestions. In this hypothetical state, the listening pianist would be the rule; the player who leaves listening to others, the exception. The listening pianist, as a matter of course, would be a non-pounding pianist; his efforts would be toward persuasion, rather than force; and the pianoforte, through the development of its peculiar qualities, would become a characteristic, not an imitative, instrument. Composers would regard it as a sustaining instrument, and its kinship to the harp would be recognized in a more general use of the sonorous arpeggio figures.

PRESENT POSSIBILITIES

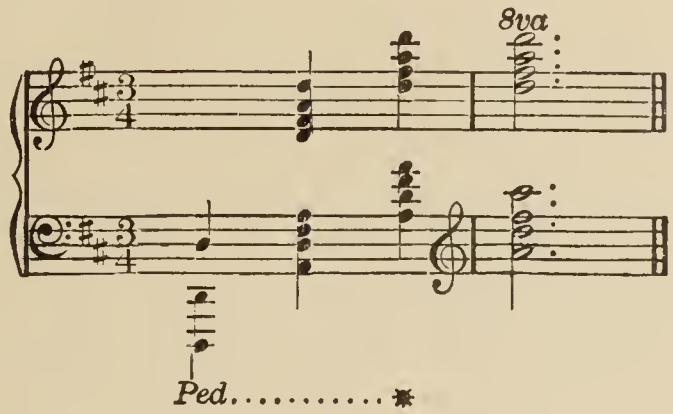
The author believes many of these desirable results may be brought about with the pianoforte as it is, if pianists will adopt such a wisely-generous use of the pedal as to make the raised dampers, during performance, normal.

There will be the natural striving for a singing, musical touch, as, with free wires, a hard, inflexible tone, often the result of playing without sufficient pedal, becomes unbearable; and pupils, urged to listen, will almost instinctively adapt the touch to such a sensitive and responsive instrument. This is not overlooking the great importance of effects with closed dampers, which serve as an indispensable contrast to rich, vital tone, and which are as essential to proper phrasing as the downward inflection of the speaking voice.

THE FACULTY OF LISTENING

The first object of these studies is to develop critical and discriminative power in the pupil through his sense of hearing, and to accustom him to a long-sustained harmonic plane, employing, at times, the full compass of the keyboard. This example of an har-

monic plane, broken by a premature raising of the pedal,



represents a common error of even advanced students.

The uncritical player shuts off an accumulation of sounds like this, from a vague feeling that "the pedal must not be held too long;" the listening and thinking pianist, on the contrary, finds that when these low, middle and high notes are made to sound at the same time by holding the pedal through, the effect is sonorous and harmonious. The dim apprehension of the function of the pedal, expressed in the feeble negation "it must not be held too long," should change to definite knowledge, the result of listening and thinking, of its effective duration.

The Ankle There are, at the beginning of the book, a few exercises for the quick and rhythmical moving of the foot alone. They should not be neglected, as a loose and active ankle is as important as a free wrist.

Pedal Indication The signs *Ped.* * are obviously inadequate to the *exact science* that pedalling should become. Their use gives the player only an approximate idea of the composer's intention in complicated passages, and is frequently inaccurate and obscure. In these studies, pedal time-values are indicated by notes between the staves; and students are urged to give them their exact value, the shift up and down being made by a quick movement of the foot, the upward motion beginning on the beat.

Legato Pedal Another purpose of the studies is attainment of the difficult Legato, or "Syncopated," pedalling, as it is sometimes called. The proper binding of two detached chords requires that the first be held by the foot until the second is struck, at which instant the pedal is shifted. Both chords are heard for a fraction of a second (the time required to release the pedal), and in this flash of time the edges of the two harmonies are welded so that no break is perceptible. The up-movement of the pedal should be simultaneous with the down-movement of the keys; but an exact rule for the following down-movement of the pedal cannot be given, as different conditions and effects must be considered.

To insure clearness it should be somewhat delayed in connecting strongly-vibrating chords; but in other cases it may follow the up-movement immediately.

When the down-movement is considerably delayed, the chord is heard to swell; this, however, is a special effect, somewhat aside from the aim of elementary pedal legato, which should be, to keep the sympathetic overtones in, practically, continuous vibration.

The player should determine for himself the effective uses of the down-pedal, as constant exercise of critical judgment through the sense of hearing will strengthen his grasp of all acoustical questions.

Advanced Pedalling The "retained bass" is illustrated by two elementary exercises of a useful function of the pedal.

Control of the Pedal Exercises are given to develop independent action of the foot and to correct involuntary changes of pedal. While these are muddy and discordant, they train the mind to follow a definite pedal-part, even though opposed to musical instinct.

THE DAMPERS

A good grand pianoforte, in perfect tune, is the proper instrument for pedal study. The condition of the dampers may be tested by striking a very strong chord in the middle and lower part without pedal; if there is any sound after the hands leave the keys, a regulator or tuner should tighten the damper mechanism.

NEW YORK, 1904

I

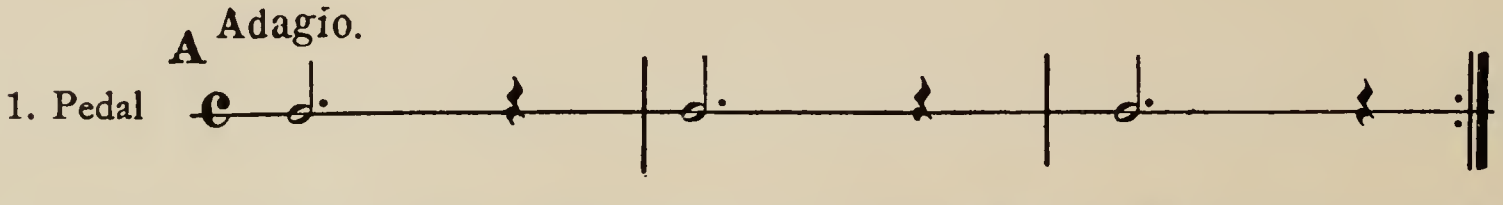
Damper Pedal Movement

Place the ball of the right foot on the damper pedal; the foot in line with the lever, and the heel, as a pivot, kept on the floor.

The up- and down-movement of the pedal should be as noiseless as possible; the foot should not leave or strike the lever.

Allow the dampers to rest firmly on the wires by a full upward movement.

Notes indicate the duration of the pedal. The time (beats) should be counted aloud.



When the pedal is used in legato passages, *the up-movement of the foot must be on the beat*, the down-movement following as early as possible.

The two movements may often be felt as one, beginning on the primary accent.

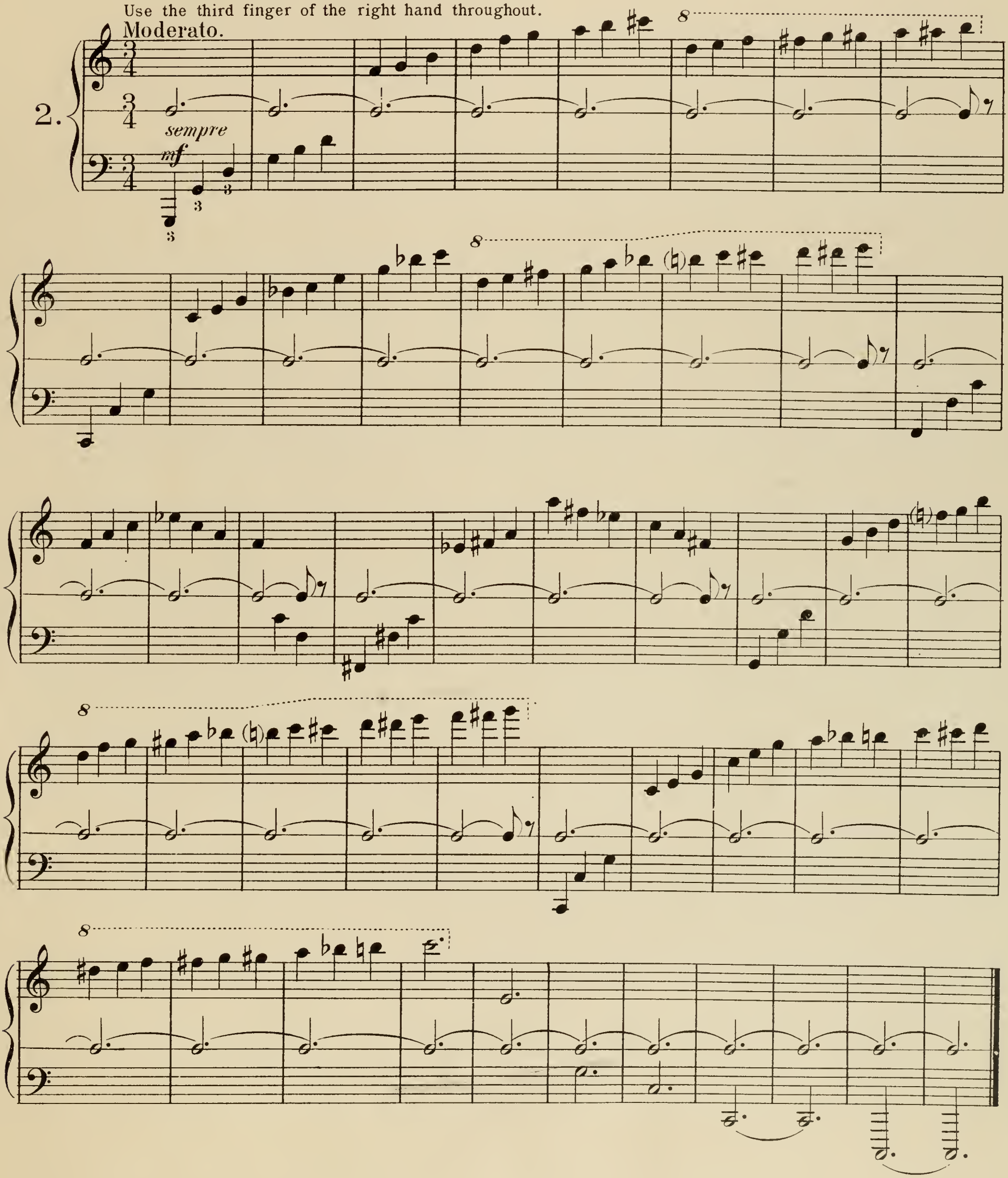
This is called the Legato (Syncopated) pedal, and its use is indicated in these studies by a diagonal line through a note.

Practise these exercises until a very rapid shift can be made with a loose ankle.

II.
The Sustained Pedal.

This exercise demonstrates the sustaining function of the damper pedal and the tonal purity of the overtone system; also that vibrations of primary notes in the lower and middle parts of the pianoforte tend to wipe out vibrations of chromatic notes in the upper register.

Use the third finger of the right hand throughout.



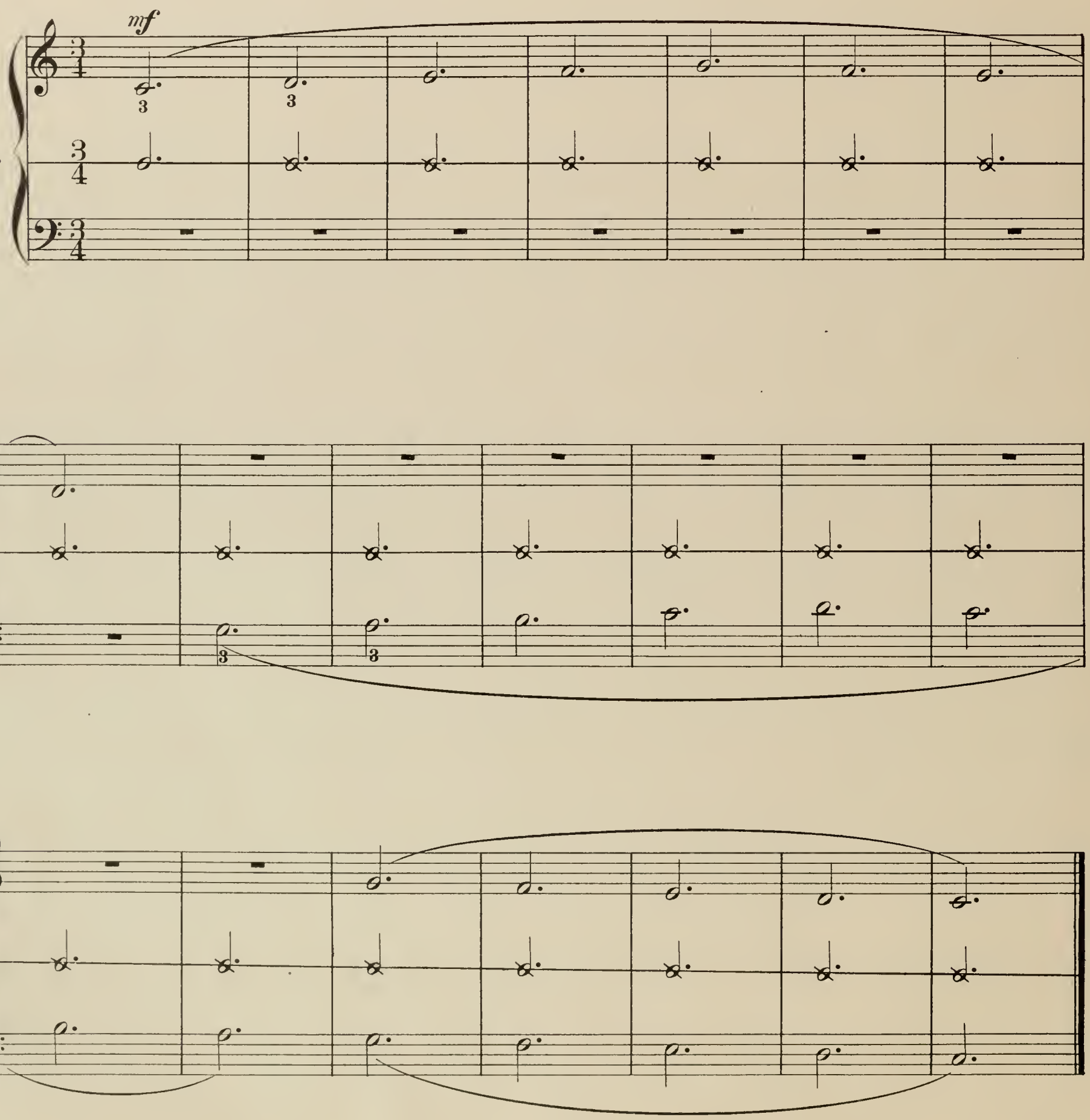
III.

The Legato Pedal.

Proper use of the pedal in legato, whether to connect detached chords or to keep the sympathetic over-tones continually sounding, is a quick up-movement of the foot (simultaneous with a down-movement of the keys) which should entirely silence the previous notes. The down-movement of the foot should follow as soon as clearness will allow.

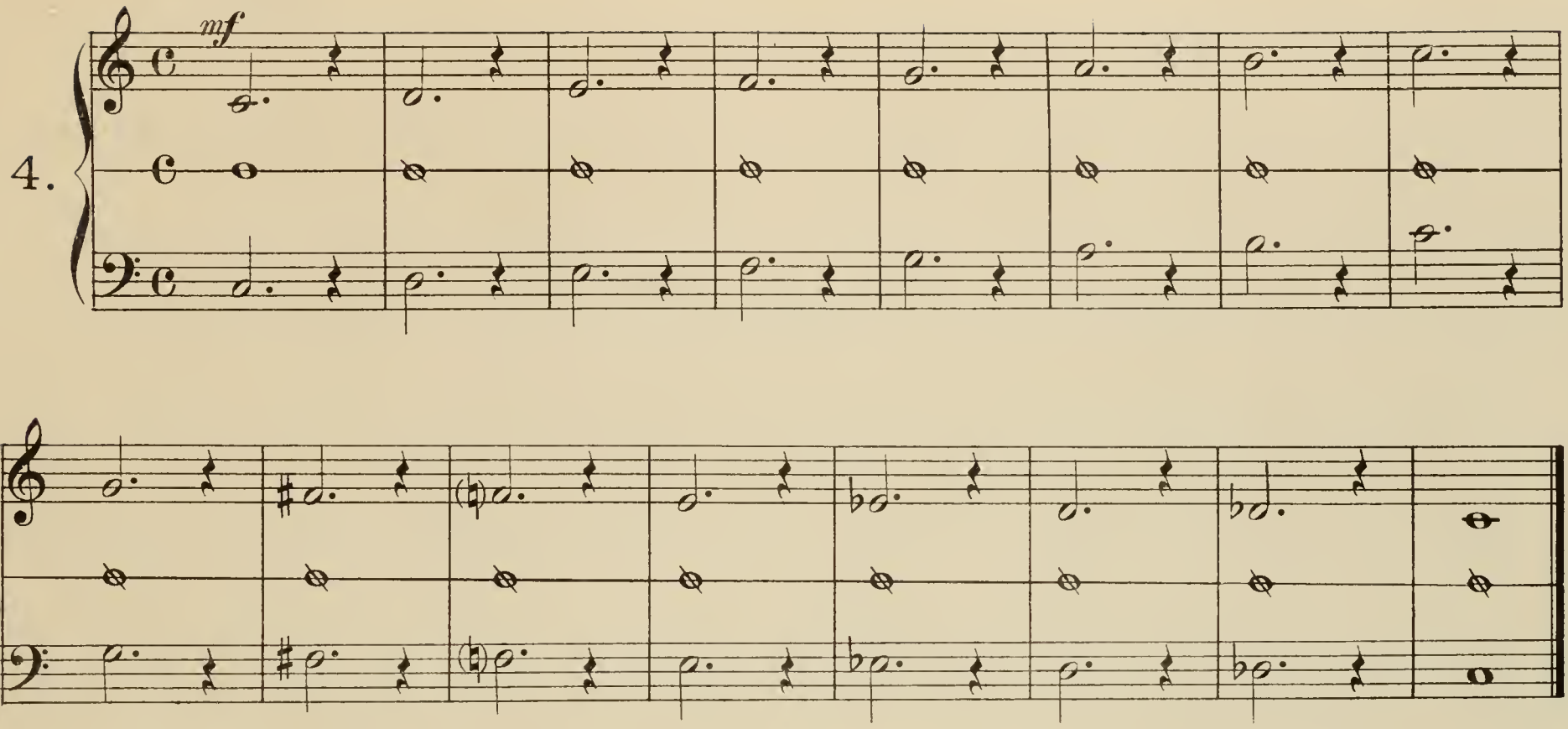
Andante.

Use the third fingers throughout.



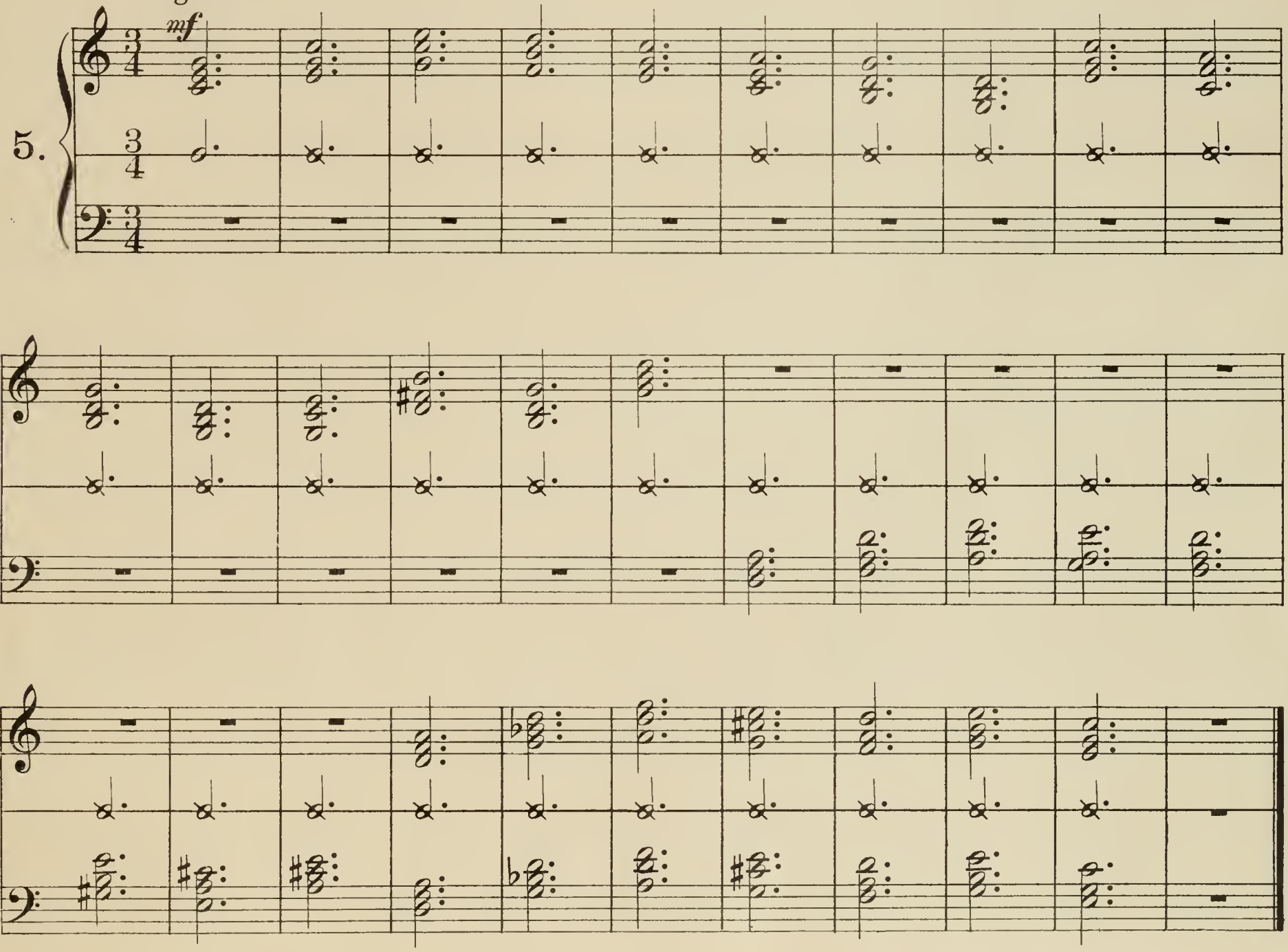
Moderato.

4.



Allegretto.

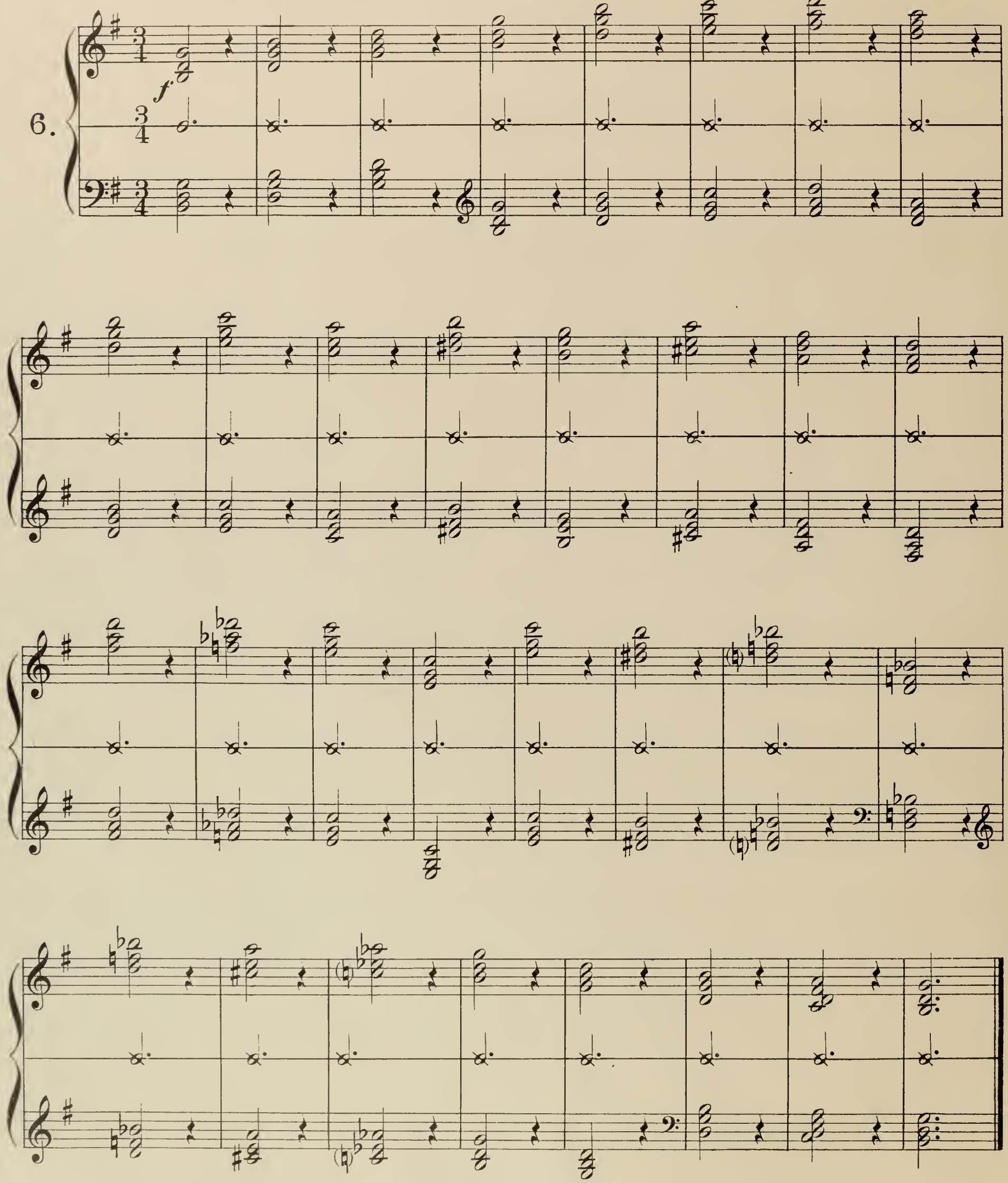
5.



Allegro.

The chords should be struck exactly together.

6.



Moderato.

7.

mf

diminuendo

pp

crescendo

f

Moderato.

8.

f

Moderato grazioso.

9.

p *legato*

sf

sf

crescendo

pp

f

p

sf

crescendo

f

diminuendo

rallentando

sf

a tempo

pp

crescendo

f

sf *sf* *sf* *sf*

diminuendo

sff

p diminuendo

pp

Moderato.

10.

ten. *ten.* *ten.*

f

ten. *ten.* *ten.*

crescendo

mf

ff

mf

p crescendo

ff

diminuendo e rallentando

Maestoso.

11.

f

crescendo

ff

m.d.

diminuendo

p

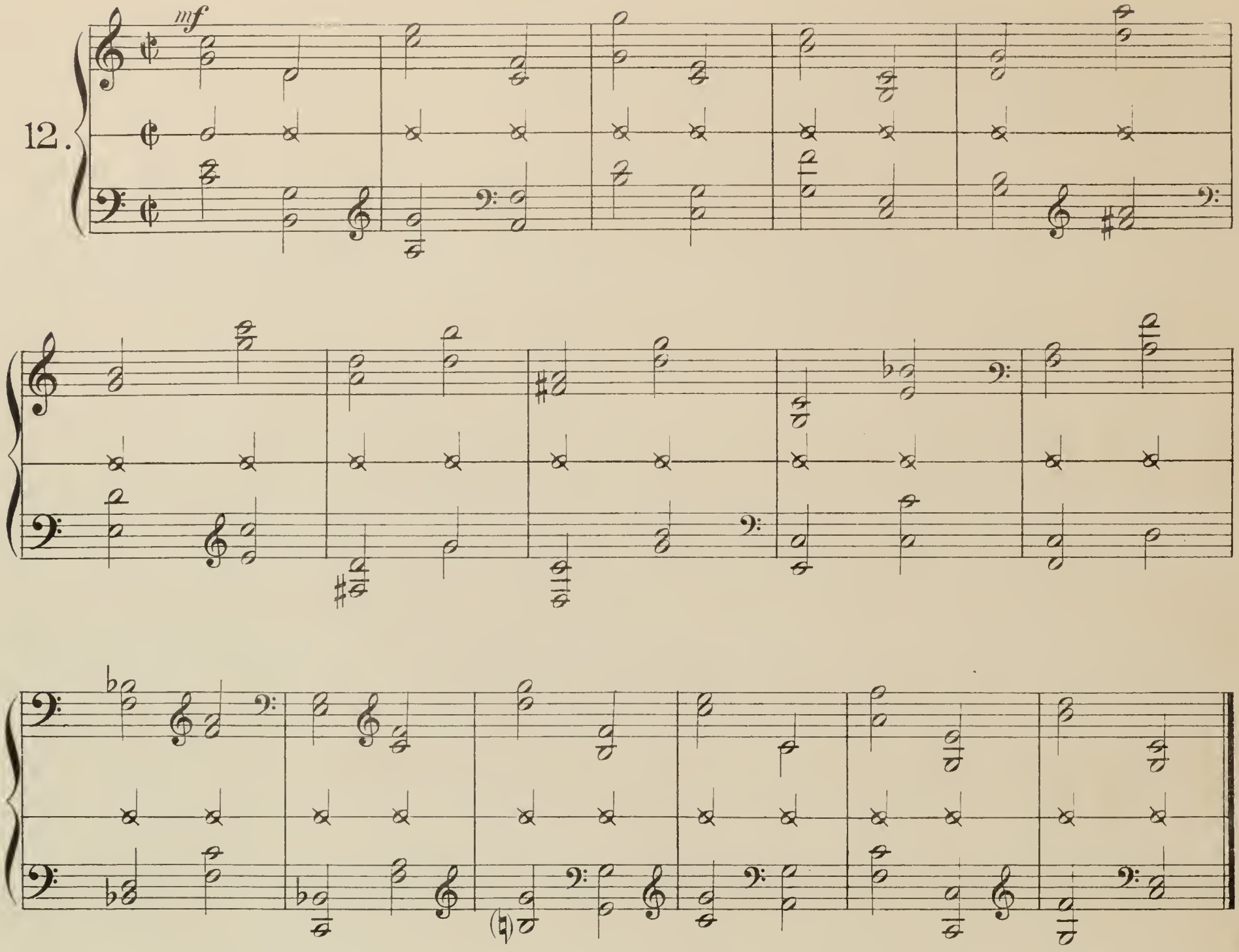
pp

rallentando e diminuendo

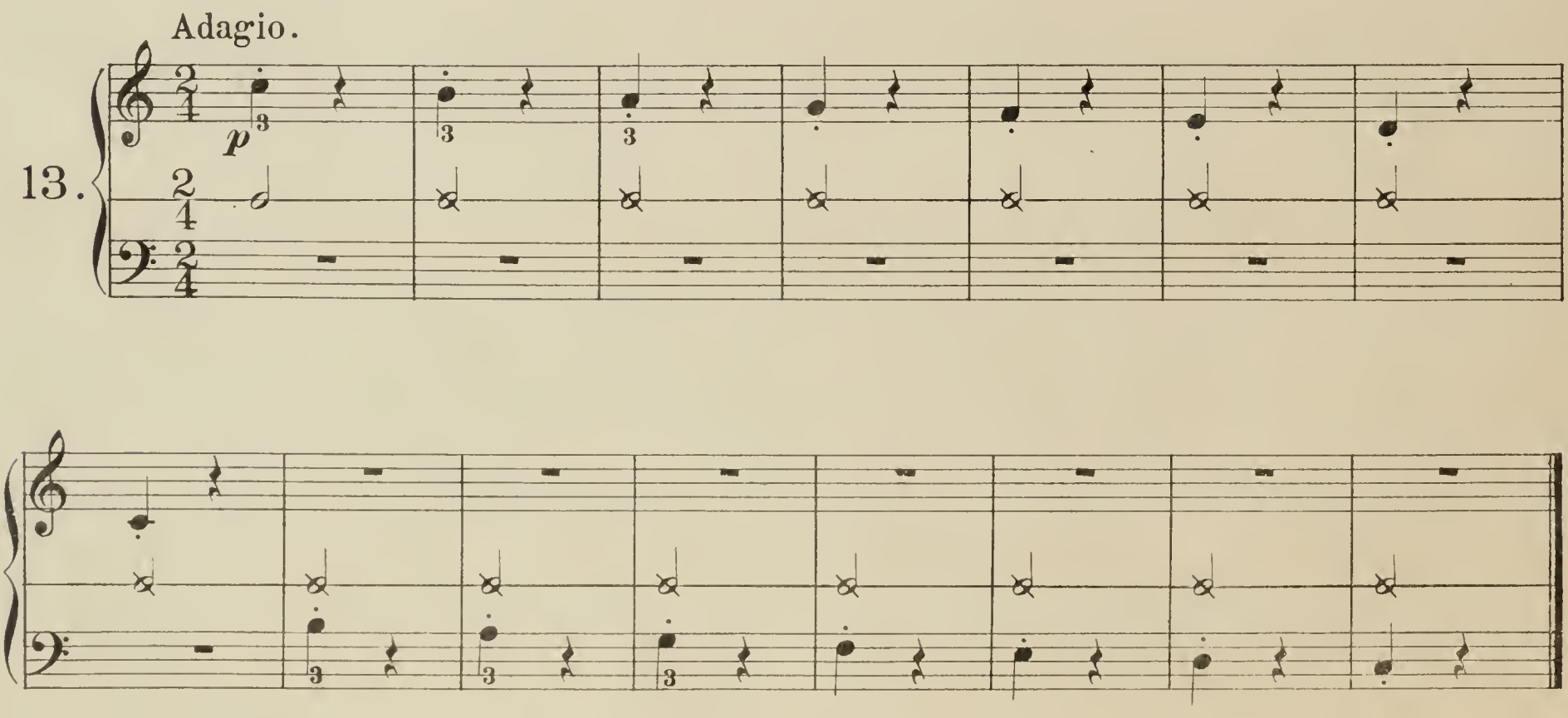
ppp

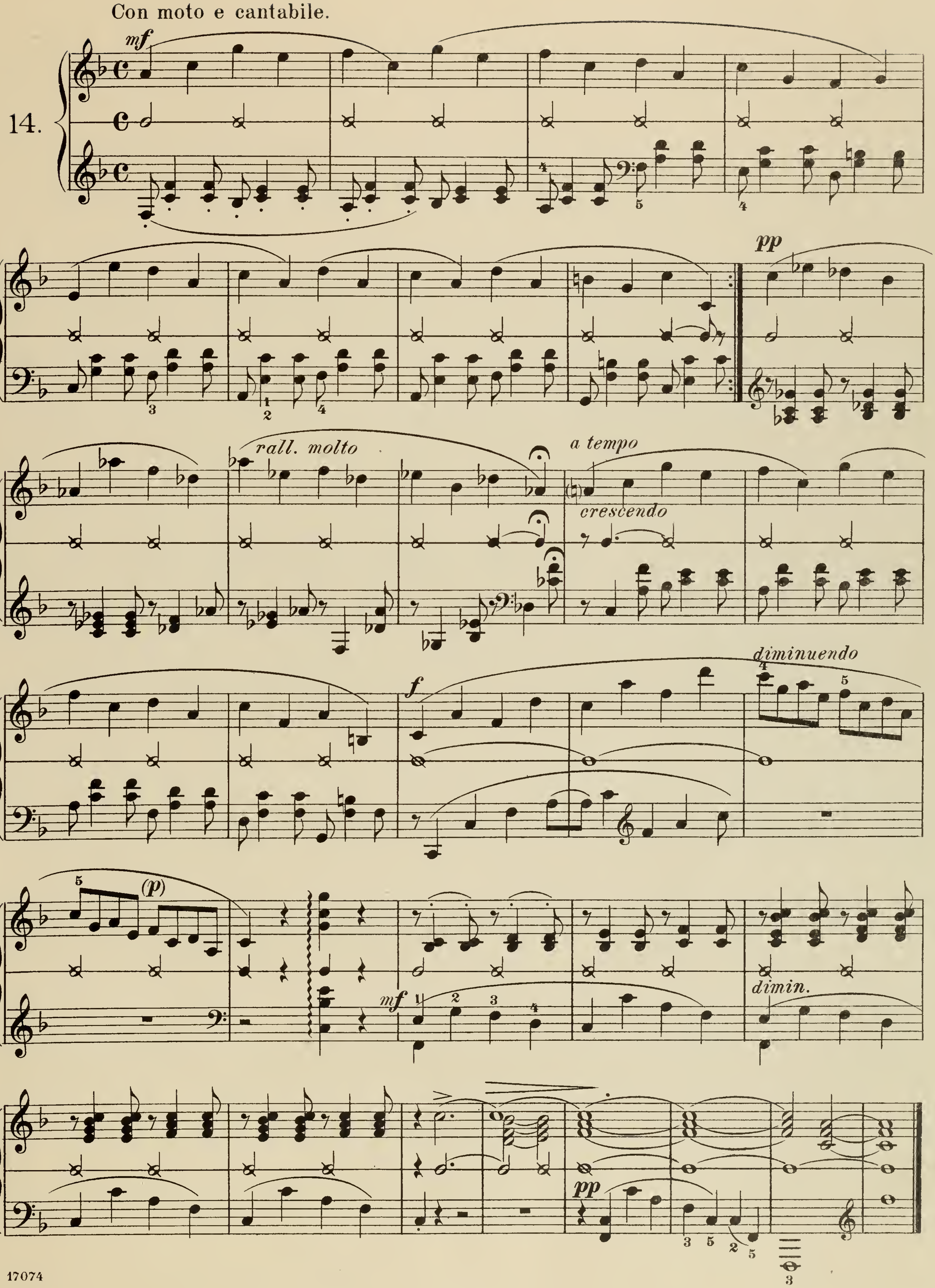
Adagio.

12.



13. Adagio.




Con moto e cantabile.
14.
mf
pp
rall. molto
a tempo
crescendo
diminuendo
f
(p)
mf
dimin.
pp

Grazioso.

15.

p *sempre legato*

f *diminuendo*

p *crescendo*

f

diminuendo

p *diminuendo*

pp *diminuendo*

ppp

Larghetto.

16.

p *crescendo*

f diminuendo

mf crescendo

ff dimin.

dimin.

f

mf *dimin.*

p e rallentando

Andante espressivo.

Throughout with the third finger of each hand.

17.

p

più f

f

rall.

a tempo

pp

dimin. e rallent.

Grazioso e con sentimento.

18.

p *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

(poco ritenuto) *più* ***p***

dolce

sf *sf*

crescendo

f

dimin. e rallent.

a tempo
ten.

pp

crescendo

sostenuto

sff

f

sf *sf* *sf* *dimin.*

p

poco accelerando

pp

A firm pressure-touch should give these chords an organ-like quality.

Sostenuto molto.

19.

mf

p

crescendo

f *mf* *crescendo*

f

crescendo

ff

Largamente

f diminuendo

mf diminuendo

crescendo molto

rallentando

fff

When 𝅗𝅥· 𝅘𝅥 etc is preceded by a rest the pedal is to be put down just after the note is struck and before it is released.

Andante espressivo.

The left hand alone.

20.

p *sempre legato*

crescendo

sf *diminuendo (poco ritard.)*

crescendo

f diminuendo

rallentando (𝄐) *a tempo*

f

sf

sf

crescendo

p

ff

1

sf

sf

diminuendo

rallentando

sf

a tempo

pp

p

ppp

IV.

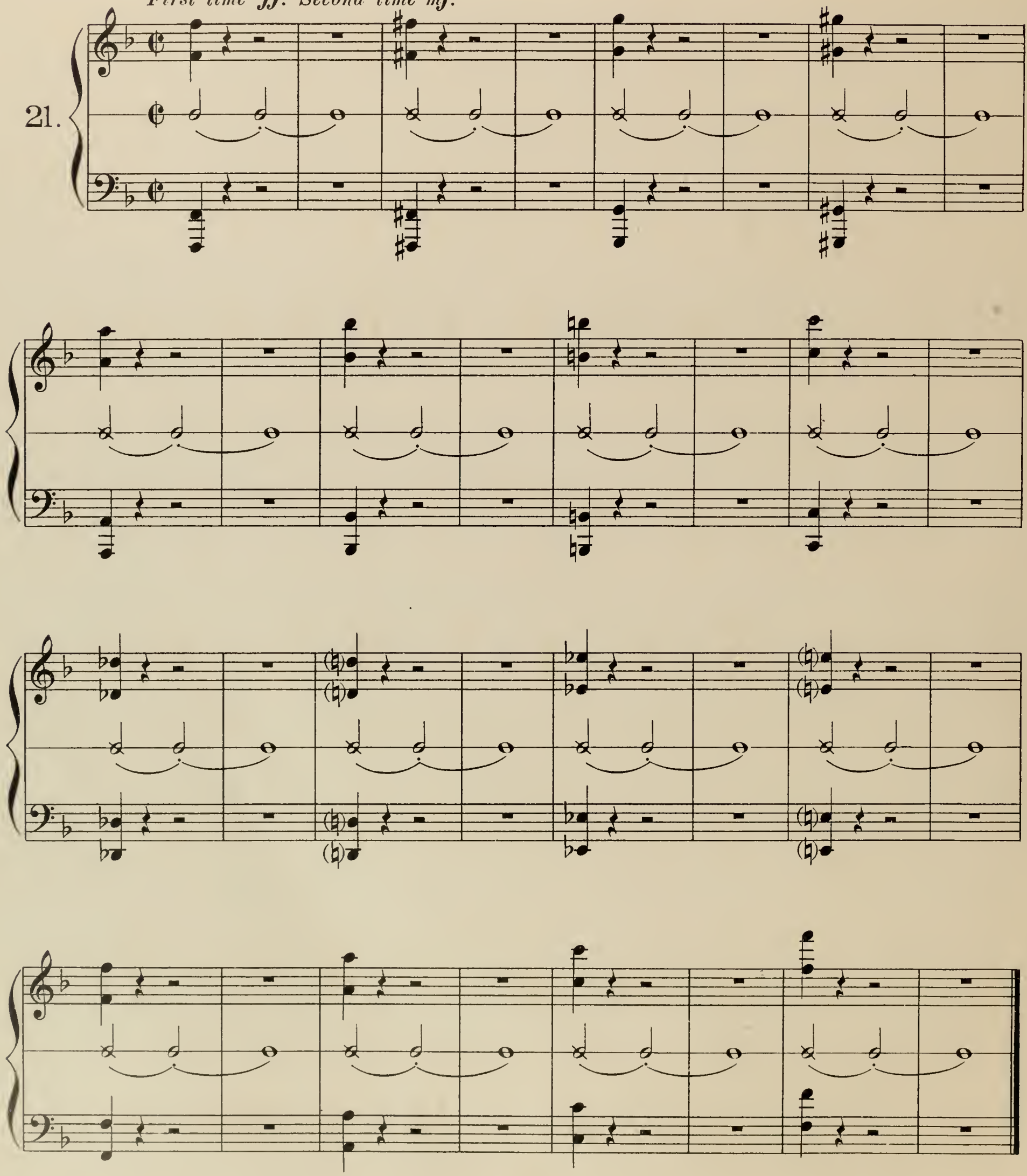
The Retained Bass

The pedal, at the sign 𝅗𝅥, should be raised sufficiently to silence the upper tones while retaining the sound of the lower ones, and then instantly depressed.

Andantino.

First time ***ff****. Second time* ***mf****.*

21.



22.

Adagio.

mf

f

(Chorale "St. Anne.")

mf *p* *f*

mf *p* *f*

(♭)

(♭)

mf

diminuendo

ppp

sff

V.

The Staccato Touch with Pedal.

Poco lento e grazioso.

The right hand alone.

23.

mf *sempre staccato* *pp* *mf* *p* *f*

p

sf

sf *crescendo*

diminuendo *e* *poco* *rallentando*

p *a tempo*

pp

diminuendo

poco *rallentando*

VI.

Various Uses of the Pedal.

Allegro amoroso.

24.

f *mf*

diminuendo

p espressivo

crescendo

rallentando molto

f

pp dolcissimo

8

sf

crescendo e poco rallentando

sf

f a tempo

diminuendo

p

diminuendo

pp *crescendo*

diminuendo

mf *diminuendo*

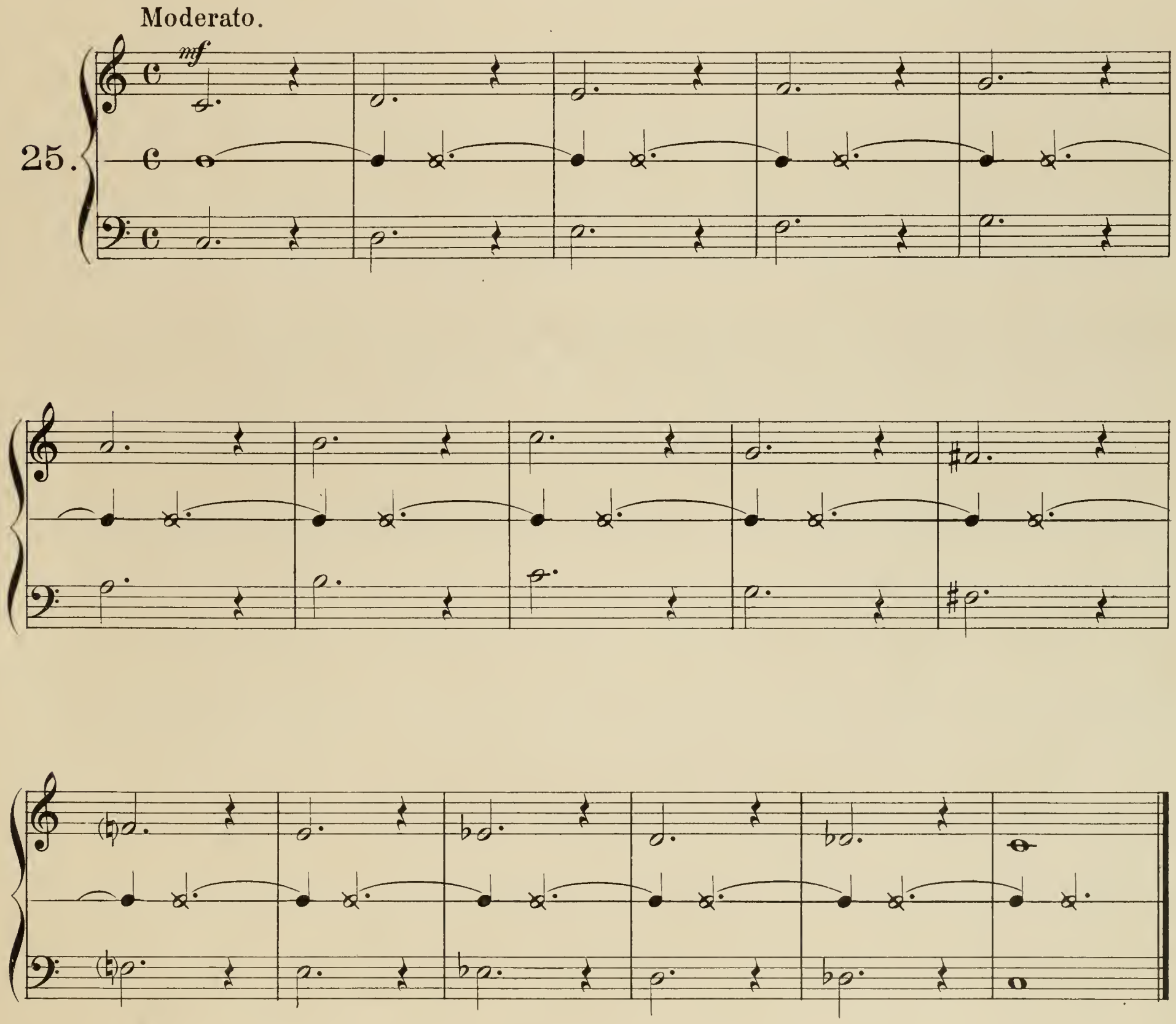
f

sf

VII.

Independent Movement of the Foot.

Some of the foregoing exercises are here presented in an exaggerated form of pedal legato in order to develop independence of the foot by checking all involuntary action. The student thereby gains control through mental concentration, undisturbed by temptation of the discord to raise the lever, and so learns to follow arbitrary pedal notes. *



* The method of "teaching by exaggeration" has won an important place in modern pedagogics; it is indispens - able not only in connection with technical difficulties, but as an aid to giving a clear view of artistic prob - lems.

Allegro.

26.

f

Moderato.

27.

mf

diminuendo

pp

crescendo

f

Moderato.

28. *f*

Grazioso.

sempre legato

p

crescendo

29.

diminuendo

f

p

crescendo

f

diminuendo

p diminuendo

pp diminuendo

ppp

End of Part I.

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